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ABSTRACT

This issues of Communique, a newsletter providing resource information for practicing counselors, features a decisional "balance sheet", to aid students who are thinking about college in making sound, stable decisions that involve careful scanning of all the relevant considerations; reports of three studies in curriculum decision making designed to investigate the application of principles derived from a conflict theory of decision making to the study of decision making among high school and college students; and a description of a Continuing Education program designed especially for students who experience great difficulty in staying or succeeding in school. Brief articles summarizing recent and relevant research for the counselor appear in the Vibrations section of the newsletter. In addition, dissertation abstracts and synopses of journal articles are included, as well as brief comments on them by members of the Communique staff. (SES)

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The Balance Sheet: Procedure and College Choice

by Leon Mann

Rationale

One of the major principles of conflict theory is that stable decision making is a function of the extent to which the individual has mulled over all the relevant considerations before making up his mind. The student, who in coming to a choice of college, neglects to think about a whole class of considerations—say, the quality of the faculty or the feelings of his parents—will be vulnerable to a great deal of criticism and regret after he announces his choice and again, after he implements it.

Often, in decisions about college, a choice is based on only one or two types of consideration, namely utilitarian gains for the self (e.g. the pleasant social and physical environment at Podunk U., the intellectual caliber of its faculty, the easy availability of scholarships, etc.). But because there are gaps in the student's thinking—for example, friend's opinions in the matter, parental advice, costs to other members of the family—any post decisional criticism from his social network, because it is unexpected and has not been taken into account, will make for an unstable decision. Similarly, if only social considerations are thought about—as sometimes happens when a student chooses a college because of a family tradition—any adverse feedback about utilitarian considerations, such as the discovery of tough school requirements, or the distance from home and friends, will jeopardize the success of the decision.

Conflict theory has assumed that sound, stable decision making involves careful scanning of all the relevant types of consideration that enter into a decisional "balance sheet." The basis of the assumption is that the process of recognizing and taking into account all the positive and negative consequences of a decision has an immunizing effect which enables the individual to live with his decision even if negative consequences occur.

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Three Studies in Decision Making (p. 54)

Helping "Problem Kids" Stay in School (p. 56)

Interview Schedule for Balance Sheet Procedure

Part I—Introduction (to be paraphrased, not read)

1. I guess the first thing is to give you some idea of what we are going to try to do. We are trying to gather some information about the ways in which people go about making important decisions. One way to do this is simply to talk to people about actual decisions which they are currently thinking about. Briefly, what we'd like to do here today is talk about your plans for next year—how you came to these decisions.

2. All we want is some information about your thinking. We hope that you will talk spontaneously about your decisional considerations. We intend to ask you a few general questions and, then, to explore some of the detailed considerations with you.

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3. Would you object to my tape-recording our conversation? Good.

Now, from our brief experience with this study, we have learned that it is helpful to begin by finding out how far you have come toward making a decision about next year. So, we have devised some general classifications that we call "stages" which seem to help people tell us how far along they are. First, I'll describe each of these four stages of decision making; then I'll ask you to indicate which one applies to you and the reasons for your choice. O.K.?

Stage I would apply to you if you haven't thought at all about next year—that is, if you haven't really considered any possible plans.

Stage II applies if you have done some thinking about one or more possible colleges, but you haven't really picked one as more attractive or as the one you will attend.

Stage III involves having already selected one school as the best, but not having committed yourself to it. In other words, you think that it is the best one, but you haven't done anything about it that would stand in the way of changing your mind if you wanted to.

Finally, Stage IV: here you have picked one school and have in some way committed yourself to it. For example, if you have announced your decision to your family or friends, or sent a letter of acceptance to the school, you would be in Stage IV.

So, to summarize these stages of decision making: if you haven't begun thinking about it, you are in Stage I; if you have begun thinking, but haven't made up your mind, you are in Stage II; if you have tentatively made up your mind, you are in Stage III; if you have committed yourself to a decision so that it is fairly well settled, you are in Stage IV.

1. O.K., now which one do you think applies to you? (a.) Can you tell me why? (b.) When would you say you arrived at this stage? (c.) How did you arrive at this stage? (d.) Can you describe to me your previous stages; that is, how do the other stages seem applicable to you, if at all?

2. Fine, now would you tell me (more about) how your plans for next year are shaping up and how the whole issue of your future college career looks to you at present?

3. O.K. (You have already mentioned some of the alternative schools that you have considered, but) could you now list all the alternative schools which you have seriously considered at one time or another in recent months? (You have already started to cover this, but I need to be a bit more sure of it, so) would you now rank each of these schools in terms of which

THE STRONGEST PRINCIPLE OF GROWTH LIES IN HUMAN— CHOICE ... multitudes, multitudes in the valley of — decision ... WHEN I CONSIDER HOW MY LIFE IS SPENT... I TOOK THE ONE LESS TRAVELLED BY, AND THAT HAS MADE ALL THE DIFFERENCE ... the difficulty in life is — the choice ... BUT FEW ARE CHOSEN ... where to elect — there is but one, 'tis Hobson's choice – take that or none ... NOT TO DECIDE IS TO DECIDE ... I do not choose to run ... SMALL CHOICE IN ROTTEN APPLES ... necessity delivers us from the embarrassment of choice ... WHO SHALL DECIDE WHAT MOMENT CONSTITUTES POSTERITY ? ... usage, in which lies the decision ... in — EQUAL SCALE WEIGHING DELIGHT AND DOLE ... I — called the new world into existence to redress the – balance of the old ... FOR ME, THERE IS ONLY ... A PATH WITH A HEART ... and your word is a light – to my path ... IN THE MIDDLE OF THE ROAD of LIFE, I

Studies in Curriculum Decision Making

by Leon Mann

The aim of a recent research project was to investigate the application of principles derived from a conflict theory of decision making to the study of decision making among high school and college students. Three studies were conducted to test derivations from conflict theory.

Study one tested the effectiveness of a balance sheet or *tallying procedure* used to induce a sample of high school students to think carefully about all considerations relevant to their choice of college. In support of the experimental hypothesis, students exposed to the balance sheet procedure three months before their decision showed on a number of measures taken six weeks after that decision, greater decisional stability than a control group. In comparison with control subjects, students administered the balance sheet procedure (1) expressed less post decisional regret and reported less concern about their choice following the decision, (2) selected a wider array of alternatives in formulating the decision, (3) took into account more self-related considerations and fewer social considerations, and (4) were less interested in receiving supportive, dissonance-reducing information. On the basis of spontaneous comments made by students exposed to the procedure, these effects appear to have been mediated by: (1) increased salience of the importance of the decision, (2) predecisional clarification of the relative merits of the choice alternatives, (3) stimulation of a search for feasible alternatives, (4) increased awareness of new, relevant considerations, and (5) learning a technique for systematically comparing and weighing choice alternatives.

Study two dealt with a *commitment warning* procedure designed to inhibit the tendency to use superficial and hasty decision making in everyday decisions. It was predicted, in line with conflict theory, that when college students are warned that their choice of an item is to be considered final and irrevocable they will show more cautious decision making. Seventy-nine college students who participated in a study of art preferences were offered a choice between two art prints to keep as a reward. The severity of the commitment warning was varied by giving different sets of instructions to different groups of subjects. In the *choice revocable* group, subjects were told they would be able to change their minds if they wished to, and return to exchange the print. In the *choice irrevocable* group, subjects learned that they would have to sign for the print and would be unable to change their minds. In a third experimental group, subjects not only learned that they would have to sign for the print and that they would be unable to change their minds, but also were told they would be required to write an essay justifying their choice. Consistent with the experimental prediction, time taken to arrive at a decision was strongly affected by the degree of commitment implied in the warning. Decision time was relatively short in the group with the revocable choice, was twice as long in the choice of irrevocable group, and more than tripled among subjects required to justify their choice after an irrevocable decision. In addition, the most highly committed group showed less tendency to predecisionally "bolster" the alternatives than the other two groups, indicating that here too the commitment warning initiated a psychological set to approach the decision problem carefully and objectively.

Study three was concerned with the conflict theory hypothesis that preferences for supportive and utilitarian information are related to the student's stage or phase in the decising making process. A sample of high school seniors faced with a choice between colleges was offered information files relevant to their preferred and less-preferred alternatives at three time periods during the decision process: (1) one month before the decision; (2) one week after the decision; and (3) six weeks after the decision. The overall pattern of information preferences across stages (with the exception of the second time period) supported the hypothesis that in the predecision phase, students are equally receptive to positive and negative facts about the leading choice alternatives; but in the post decision phase, students are selectively interested in supportive, dissonance-reducing information. There was also a differential receptivity to utilitarian information at each of the three time periods. In general, interest in a class of information varied as a function of its relevance and usefulness for solving problems related to different stages of the decision process.

Results of the three studies tend to support the derivations from conflict theory, but in addition to their theoretical significance, may be of value to counselors and teachers concerned with developing sound principles of decision making in their students. Study I reveals that the *balance sheet* procedure is a promising technique for inducing students to think carefully about relevant considerations prior to making a choice. Study 2 shows that at least for everyday decisions, the announcement of the tendency to appraise alternatives superficially and subjectively before arriving at a decision. Finally, Study 3 provides preliminary evidence that in order for information to be effective it must be appropriate to the specific needs and problems of the particular stage in the decision process at which the student is located.

As a result of the promise indicated in this research, *Communique* presents the balance sheet procedure in detail in the adjoining article.

seems to be the best one for you, as you see it right now? (Which would be your 2nd choice? 3rd?, etc.?)

4. Have you tried to get information about any of these schools? Which schools? What kinds of information? Have you talked to anyone about these schools? (To whom?) When did you get this information? (If Stage IV, "Have you talked to anyone or obtained more information since you committed yourself? What kind?)

5. Now I would like to ask you to focus on the 1st two alternatives: _____ and _____. What are the various positive and negative points —that is, pros and cons— of each of these two alternatives? (You have already mentioned several, but I'm not sure that I have a very complete picture of this aspect of your thinking.) Let's start with your **1st** choice, _____. Would you try to think of all the possible arguments or considerations in favor of or against this school? Can you think of anything else? Now let's go on to your **2nd** Anything else? choice, _____. What are the various pros and cons for this choice? Can you think of anything else?

6. You've gone through some of your alternatives and their pros and cons. What I'd' like to do now is to go through the possible considerations in a more systematic way. The considerations which go into a decision may be divided into four different kinds or types:

a. **Utilitarian considerations: gains and losses for yourself** (e.g., scholarships, the faculty, courses, physical and social environment, etc.).

b. **Utilitarian considerations: gains and losses for others** (e.g., cost to parents, status for family, distance from home, etc.)

c. **Approval or disapproval by others;** includes being criticized and being excluded from a group, as well as being praised or obtaining prestige, admiration and respect (from parents, friends or community).

d. **Self-approval or disapproval:** (i.e., extent to which considerations meet one's ethical values and affect one's sense of self-esteem).

What I'd like you to do is to place each of the pros and cons you just mentioned, and others you might think of, under one of these headings. Here's a chart that you can use. First, let's do your first choice, _____. Finished? Now your second choice, _____. Fine. Now, all of these are things you might consider in deciding on which school to go to. But when it comes down to making a choice, some considerations are more important to you than others. What I'd like you to do now is to go back over the charts and put a number between 1 and 5 next to each consideration according to how important that consideration is to you. A 5 would mean it is **very important,** while a 1 means it is of **little or no importance to you.** O.K.?

7. **(If not at Stage IV)** Good! Now, suppose you had to make up your mind to act on a final decision today—to commit yourself to a final decision right now. What would you think about and what would you do? What I want here is for you to talk about all the thoughts that would go into making this final decision at the point where you had to act on it and commit yourself to it.

TABLE 1

Sample Balance Sheet
(showing entries made by a subject in the experimental group, and the scoring method)

	Alternative #1 Harvard	Importance Rating	Alternative #2 Yale	Importance Rating
Utilitarian gains for self	• choice of living at home or on campus • great Engineering Dept. • Harvard offers scholarship to enable students to live on campus • In Boston	(3) (5) (3) (2)	• great Engineering Dept. • Yale offers generous scholarship aid	(5) (3)
Utilitarian losses for self	• if I lived at home, my urge to do school work (I think) would be less	(-3)	• I would be compelled to live away	**(-3)**
Utilitarian gain for others	• if I should live at home my family would save money • I would be able to live with my family & friends	(3) (4)	—	
Utilitarian losses for others	—		• my family would be forced to pay more money for my education • I would not be able to return home that often	(-3) (-2)
Social approval	• most people consider it an honor to attend Harv. • it will enable anyone to attain high goals	(2) (2)	• It's an honor to be able to attend Yale • It will mean a lot to me when I get out of school	(2) (2)
Social disapproval	—		—	
Self Approval	• prestigious university • reflects my ability for good work	(4) (5)	• prestigious university • reflects my ability for good work	(4) (5)
Self disapproval	• too academic	(-1)	• too academic	(-1)
	Sum rated positive anticipations: 33 Sum rated negative anticipations: − 4			21 − 9
	Net (positive minus negative): 29	—	difference = 17 − 12	

(If at Stage IV) Good! Now, I would like you to tell me how you finally reached a decision. What were the thoughts that went into making this final decision? How did you **finally decide** for one alternative over the others? The three most frequently mentioned effects of the procedure were:

1) **Clarification of the relative attractiveness of the choice alternatives.**

One senior, conflicted by her interest in both U. Mass and Leicester Jr. College, asserted that "the sheet pointed out to me what things are most important in making my decision. Previously I was really confused about everything— it made me think about things and clarified them in my mind. By putting things down I can more easily see what I am thinking." Others asserted that the balance sheet "made me think about learning more about each school"; "forced me to think definitely about the pros and cons (for the first time)"; and "got me to think about several things a little bit more—like the differences in colleges."

2) **Reminder of the importance of the decision.**

Several subjects mentioned that the procedure acted as a kind of challenge impressing upon them the importance and urgency of the decision. One reported: "It brought me a step further ahead by getting me to talk about it and think about it a bit more." Another: "It makes me realize it is upon me; I never realized all that went into making a decision."

3) **Stimulates search for alternatives.**

As we mentioned earlier, the procedure requires the respondent to make a comparison between at least **two** alternatives. Students who had satisfied themselves with applying to only one school became aware that they had unwisely limited their options, and some of these subjects were stimulated to seek out new

alternatives. A female student reported: "From the questioning I realized that maybe I should have applied to more places and maybe I will." Another girl, who had not yet applied to any colleges, reported "It seemed that I had more plans for the future but I guess I don't. . . . I'll have to start looking."

Less frequently mentioned effects follow:

4) **Salience of new considerations.**

Approximately 27% of the experimental group agreed that they had come to think about changes in the alternatives under consideration as a result of undergoing the balance sheet procedure. "I never thought of the bad things about either school before (now I will)."

5) **Making the decision.**

The balance sheet procedure also has some effect on the way in which respondents plan their decisions. 23% indicated they were now thinking of taking new steps to ensure a sound decision.

Long term effects

1. **Post decision conflict and regret.**

Four months after the original experimental sessions and approximately six weeks after notifying the colleges of their decision, a sample of 24 of the 30 students who had participated in the tallying procedure and a control group of 20 students in the college preparatory class was administered a post test of their plans for college. On a 3-point scale, subjects rated the magnitude of regret or concern they had experienced over their choice of college. In comparison with the control group, the balance sheet group tended to express *less* regret.

Who are the regretters?

Thirty percent of the 30 students in the experiment expressed some post decisional regret or concern over their choice of college. Who were the regretters, and why were they regretful?

Students who reported regret or concern that they may have made the wrong choice of college frequently asserted that this feeling occurred when they first started thinking what life would be like at their chosen college. In most cases, these were students who applied to only two schools, and therefore had only a limited choice when accepted. One girl, who chose a college because of its closeness to home asserted: "I have now discovered school requirements I may have trouble filling." Students who allowed one or two considerations to override all others also reported feeling uncertainty about the wisdom of their choice: "I now wonder if the school has what I need"; and "I wonder if I should have considered going to a school further away from home." In most cases, the problem of decisional instability may have been caused by failure to scan the relevant information in a realistic way before accepting admission to a college.

2. **Range of alternatives.**

One effect of the balance sheet procedure is that it apparently challenges the student to formulate his decision over a wider range of alternatives. While all but one of the experimental group subjects reported post decisionally that they had selected between two or more schools (96%), only 79% in the control group reported selecting between two alternatives.

It seems that the accounting activity involved in constructing a personal balance sheet induced students to become more deliberate and "rational" in their decision making. However, in this study, the dynamic underlying the effects of the balance sheet procedure was not under investigation, but rather its effectiveness.

It seems safe to conclude on the basis of this preliminary study that the balance sheet procedure could be a promising instrument for promoting sound, stable decision making.

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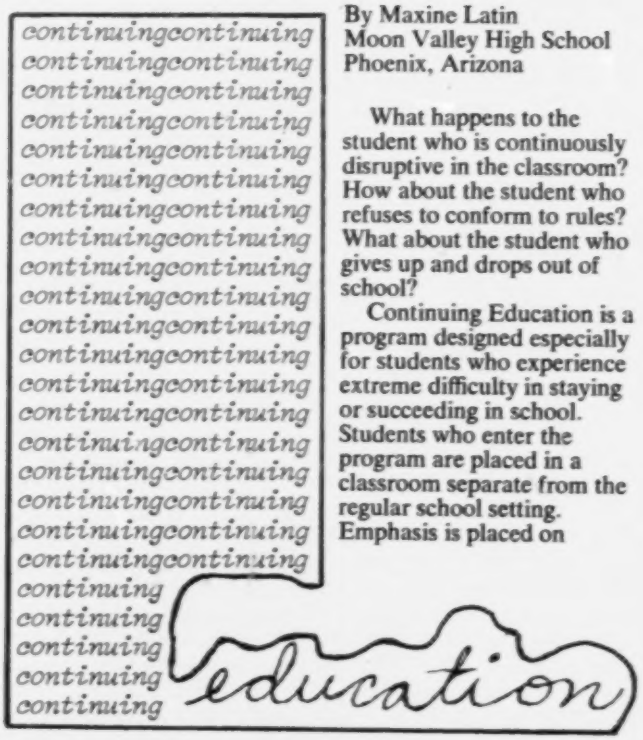

By Maxine Latin
Moon Valley High School
Phoenix, Arizona

What happens to the student who is continuously disruptive in the classroom? How about the student who refuses to conform to rules? What about the student who gives up and drops out of school?

Continuing Education is a program designed especially for students who experience extreme difficulty in staying or succeeding in school. Students who enter the program are placed in a classroom separate from the regular school setting. Emphasis is placed on behavior modification, significant and inclusive involvement, individualized instruction, a learning-oriented, rather than teaching-oriented, frame of reference, balance between the affective and the cognitive domain, and a non-punitive, encouraging, responsible, productive atmosphere. Nominations to Continuing Education come from three major groups: (1) Students suspended by any administrator—the student who gets into a fight or has problems of a chronic nature (discipline, attendance, etc.). Upon suspension, the student and parents may either take the student home or elect to have him go to Continuing Education. (2) Students who have received the maximum allowed absences may be referred by the Attendance Committee to Continuing Education. (3) Self-referral or parent referral can be made when the student can benefit from Continuing Education. Only in very rare and extenuating circumstances will a student be assigned to Continuing Education without the full consent and cooperation of the parents.

Release from Continuing Education comes after a minimum ten-day period in the program and successful completion of requirements. In cases of an indefinite, prolonged period, release would come only after detailed consultation with the principal, dean of students, counselor, teachers, parents, and others. In these cases, release may be gradual and might consist of only one class until the student can demonstrate behavior responsible enough to permit attendance in additional and eventually all classes.

Students who are nominated and accepted in the Continuing Education Program are placed in a three-phase positive behavior modification program for a minimum of ten days, depending upon the individual's needs. Upon successfully completing the three phases, the student returns to regular classes.

Evaluative Period includes the referral, gathering of relevant information, interview with potential client and parents, and the signing of the contract.

Instructions to Students Assigned to Continuing Education

Continuing Education is in room 612. Arrive quietly and report no later than 8:00 a.m. Your lunch period is from 11:00 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. You will be dismissed from school at 2:00 p.m. each day.

Rules:

1. You are to be productive, responsible, and honest.
2. You are expected to stay off campus both before school and after 2:00 p.m.
3. You will be able to earn freedoms and responsibilities.
4. Continuing Education provides an area for eating lunch.
5. Continuing Education will provide the staff to assist you in completing each of your school assignments.

Assignments will be made by your subject teachers for each day you are assigned to Continuing Education. To receive credit for the time you have missed from classes, you are required to complete each assignment to the satisfaction of your teachers.

In Continuing Education:

1. You can continue your education by doing class assignments.
2. You may make an appointment to see your counselor and you may use the library by obtaining a pass from the Continuing Education Counselor.
3. You are not counted absent from school, and this time does not count against you on your attendance record.

Instructions for Teachers With Students Assigned To Continuing Education

Student Assigned

The student named on the attached sheet has been assigned to Continuing Education for the dates indicated. Please fill out the attached assignment sheet for that period of time and return it to the assistant principal in charge of student services.

Assignments

It will be most helpful if you can list assignments for the next ten days. Chances are that the student will be returned to your class by this time. If he is to stay longer than ten days, Continuing Education will contact you for further consultation on his studies while he remains in this program.

Interview with Student

Possible questions to student:
Describe problems that brought you here in your own words.
What happens after the problem? What are the consequences?
What do your parents do?
What is the best reward anyone can give you?
If you could change one thing at home, what would it be? At school?
What are your long range goals?
What are your expectations from Continuing Education?

General Positive Reinforcers
At school:
At home and neighborhood:

General Negative Reinforcers
At school:
At home and neighborhood:

Interview with Parents

Possible questions to parents:
Why are you here?
What are the most important problems at home?
How long has the problem existed?
How do you control your child?
What type of punishment do you use? What type of discipline?
How do you reward him?
How does your child get along with his friends?
How do you get along with your child?
How does he get along with his brothers and sisters?
Is there anything else that is important?
What do you expect from us?

Phase I includes learning with the reinforcer following satisfactory completion of academic requirements. If the client fulfills all required behaviors for three consecutive days, he will be promoted to Phase II. Non-compliance means the client remains in Continuing Education.

Phase II includes more freedoms and responsibilities with emphasis on academics. Time is also spent on individual contracts or projects contingent upon completion of all school tasks. If all required behaviors are met for three consecutive days, the client is promoted to Phase III.

Phase III is an honors-type program attempting to promote self-discovery, understanding, and reality exploration. The schedule is flexible, contingent upon completion of academic tasks and the maintenance of responsible behavior. This phase attempts to dispense with the utilitarian use of contracts and "other directed" activities and reinforcers, and to build an atmosphere of self-reliance, self-discovery, and self-understanding.

Follow-up Period includes feedback from students, teachers, parents, and a complete case study on each participant in Continuing Education.

Contract Agreement

This contract agreement, made and entered as of its day of execution hereinafter set forth, shall be binding on the persons who have mutually agreed to its enactment.

Date .....

Name ..... agrees to be productive, honest, and responsible. Also, the following individualized goals will be worked toward:
1.
2.
3.

The following family goals will be worked toward:
1.
2.
3.

In consideration for the actions rendered in accordance with this contract, the parents will agree to
1.
2.
3.

and the school will agree to
1.
2.
3.

.....Student

.....Parent(s)

.....Witness (Counselor)

.....Dean of Students

.....Assistant Principal in charge of student services

VIBRATIONS

OE '74 Budget Slashed to $4.6 Billion

Education's slice of the Nixon administration 1974 budget will be an austere $4.6 billion. As a prelude to this bleak prospect for next year, the education community will be expected to tighten its belt in the current fiscal year to fit a revised '73 budget of $5.5 billion, half-a-billion less than the administration originally requested a year ago. The revised 1973 budget provides no funds for Career Education. In 1974, Vocational Education Basic Grants to states will be cut by $100 million for a final figure of $283 million for the Basic Grant program. However, the '74 budget will allow $4 million for curriculum development, and will transfer Career Education at $14 million to the National Institute of Education. It provides no funds for Occupational Education under the new Education Amendments. In line with shifting of funds, sources have also revealed that the National Institute of Education budget for '74 will be $186 million, up from its $110 million budget in '73.

Court Holds C.O.'s Entitled to Vet's Education Benefits

Financial aid counselors should note that a federal court has recently ruled that conscientious objectors who perform at least 180 days of "alternate service" are entitled to the same educational benefits accorded veterans. In an opinion by US District Judge W. Arthur Garrity, the court held that the kinds of jobs conscientious objectors must take to avoid serving in the military are such that "alternate service" works the same hardship on a young man as being in the Army. In analyzing the Veterans Readjustment Benefits Act, Judge Garrity pointed out that it was not intended to reward combat veterans, but to compensate all servicemen for missed economic and educational opportunities. Garrity further reasoned that alternate service jobs must be in the national interest, cannot be in the competitive job market, and must pay approximately what the military does. Lives of conscientious objectors are thus disrupted as much as those who go into military service. He therefore found that under the Fifth Amendment due process clause denying educational benefits to conscientious objectors who complete alternative service is arbitrary and irrelevant to the goals of the legislation.

New Manpower Research Project Compilation Available

The 1972 *Manpower Research Development Projects,* a catalog listing of active and recently completed research projects under contract or grant from the Labor Department's Manpower Administration is now available. This year, for the first time, the project listing is arranged by subject matter. Guidelines for applying for contracts on grants are included in the 305-page publication as well as the text of Title I of the Manpower Development and Training Act. Cross-references are provided in a four part index to the book. Copies of the catalog are available free from: The Manpower Information Office, Manpower Administration, U.S. Department of Labor, Washington, DC 21210.

Loan Study Released by Ford Foundation

The Ford Foundation has announced the major findings and recommendations of its task force on the "pay-as-you-earn" (PAYE) concept of helping students finance their college education. The report suggests that colleges and universities consider adoption of modified PAYE student loan plans tied to the Federal Guaranteed Student Loan Program as a means of expanding the total financial aid available to their students. The principal features of the report's recommended plan are: a fixed schedule of repayment following graduation that would increase in accord with the expected growth of the graduate's income and a guarantee by the college or university to absorb any loss from insufficient repayment by students whose incomes fail to grow in accord with the plan's assumptions.

Oregon Offers Dropout Diploma

Oregon students who leave high school before graduation will still have something to show prospective employers when the state's new competency-based education program goes into effect. Beginning with the 9th grade class in 1974, dropouts will be awarded "certificates of competence" in areas they have mastered. It's all part of a shift to goal- and competency-oriented requirements for high school graduation recently adopted by the state board of education, explains State Superintendent Dale Parnell. Besides spending about the same amount of time in the classroom, graduates will also have to "demonstrate competency in certain skills . . . needed to survive in contemporary society." Those in other states who consider the Oregon "Dropout" program worthy of replication may wish to write the Oregon state department for further information.

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Research from the Ivory Tower

(Dissertations)

Are ninth grade boys who have been labeled delinquent perceived less favorably than boys who have not been labeled? Are delinquent ninth grade boys punished more severely than their non-delinquent counterparts for the same offenses? Using 254 ninth graders and 31 teachers at a junior high school in a western state, Balch attempted to answer these questions using a traditional design of experimental and control groups. Both groups were given five vignettes on five different students, where the five students were identified as delinquent for the experimental group alone. All other information about both groups was the same. The data revealed that: (1) both students and teachers perceived the labeled boys less favorably than the unlabeled boys, and in a less consistent manner than the non-delinquents; (2) both students and teachers tended to use many of the same characteristics to distinguish the delinquents from the non-delinquents, traits like honesty, trustworthiness, and respectfulness; (3) with respect to a Punishment Scale, neither teachers nor the students tended to be more punitive toward the delinquents than the non-delinquents; but there was a strong belief by the students that teachers punish "bad" students more severely than others for the same offense.

Dissertation Abstracts International, v33 #5 p.2526-A•

Comment: Although reactions to juvenile delinquency are seen as naive, the labeled juvenile delinquent is punished because of his label. He is less well thought of by fellow students and teachers than his non-delinquent counterpart. His counterparts also expect that teachers will punish them more severely for the same offense. Thus, the non-delinquents show an inappropriate sympathy for their delinquent cohorts and, in addition, may be doing so for self-serving reasons—to maintain their own labeling as "good boys."

What is the effect of racial discrimination on earnings and employment? More specifically, what portions of the black-white earnings and employment differences can be attributed to racial discrimination and not to productivity and locational factors? Using data on 364,940 men who were separated from the Army between July 1, 1968 and June 30, 1969, Liles compiled a composite Laspeyres and Paasche index of earnings and employment differences. His index reflects: (1) the black's smaller earnings resulting from being underemployed or being paid less than an equally productive white for doing the same job; and (2) the black's reduced earnings which result from being unemployed more than an equally productive white, on the average. Results of the study indicate that: (1) scholastic achievement is quantitatively the most important determinant of black-white earnings and employment differences; (2) the extent of racial discrimination in the labor market decreases as the educational level of blacks increases (the "sheepskin" hypothesis); (3) racial discrimination is greatest in the South and least in the West, after adjusting for black-white distributional differences with respect to locational factors; (4) racial discrimination may have lessened in occupations associated with close contact between consumers and employees; yet, discrimination is greater in those occupations which have a low percentage of blacks.

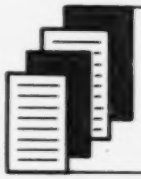
Dissertation Abstracts International, v33 #5 pp.1929-A•

Comment: Perhaps the charges of tokenism by minority group members are very real. For what it seems to take to reduce racial prejudice in organizations is a large percentage of minority members to confront attitudes of discrimination. This research suggests that most organizations may find their token members acceptable because the real prejudices are never confronted.

While we are aware that some students have a higher potential for dropping out of school than others, are we equally as aware of programs that can stem the tide of this dropping out? Wing (1972) studied one such program in his doctoral research. His investigation used 75 secondary school students (identified as having high potential for dropping out of school) as tutors and 75 elementary students as the tutored. His findings were that tutoring had a positive effect on the tutors' school atendance and that the student tutor groups (of dropouts) had lower dropout rates than non-tutors the semester following the first project year. Furthermore, both student tutors and project supervisors overwhelmingly supported continuation of the tutoring program. Although referring classroom teachers were not as supportive, a majority did indicate a desire to refer students if the program continued. Perhaps, the most significant finding was that student tutors generally ranked the actual tutoring of children as he most meaningful activity in the program.

Dissertation Abstracts International v33 #4 pp.1452-53-A•

Comment: To "educators" of any stripe: part of what constitutes our feelings of self-worth is a knowledge of and the experience that we all have something to contribute. Participatory problem solving might be a productive approach for helping those who seek out our help.



Research from Your Busy Colleagues

(Journals)

Success is self-perpetuating, even for young children. Study results indicate that by the time a youngster is seven, he has internalized rules concerning the conditions under which he may reward himself. Eighty boys and girls were introduced to an experimenter who expressed interest in their performance on some games. He showed them a pursuit rotor and told them they could earn tokens exchangeable for valuable prizes. During the trial period, some children were led to believe their performance was good and others, that it was poor. During a second game, the children were permitted to reward themselves depending upon their own estimates of their performance. Children in the success conditions rewarded themselves significantly more than did those in the failure conditions.

Developmental Psychology, 7(2), pp.110-118•

If you really want to help a child, *don't* spend time working with him—work with his parents! In a study examining the effects of three psychological interventions—child therapy, parent counseling and information feedback to teachers and parents—using 91 elementary children referred for emotional and behavioral problems, it was found that child therapy resulted in lower grades for children at all socioeconomic levels. Information feedback was most successful in improving grades for upper class children, while parent counseling led to improved grades for lower level class children. While all interventions led to some improvement in peer behaviors, it was apparent that positive parental attention provided children with a kind of support which cannot be quickly replaced by therapist intervention.

Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, 39(3), pp.347-360•

A series of studies were undertaken to compare the self concepts of disadvantaged and advantaged students from elementary and secondary schools in both urban and suburban settings. The results from an analysis of variance design indicated consistently higher and significantly more positive self concepts for disadvantaged than for advantaged children. It would seem that disadvantaged children do not necessarily suffer more from lower self-esteem and a lower sense of personal worth, as is often claimed, than their more advantaged counterparts. It may be true that advantaged children have greater economic benefits, but these may be accompanied by a greater pressure to succeed and a higher expectation level of both achievement and social behavior.

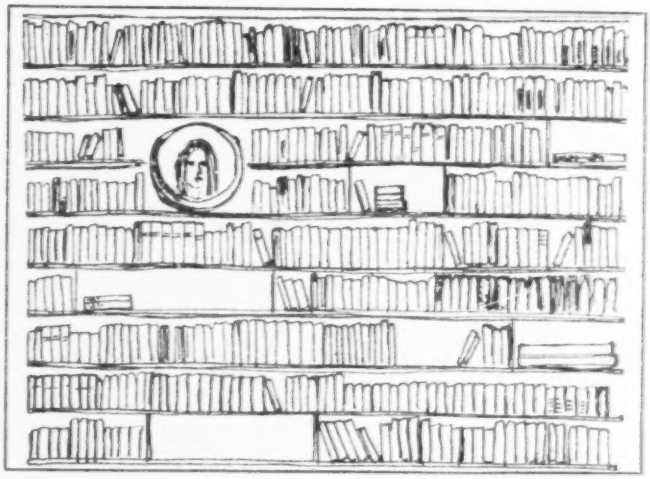
American Psychological Association *Proceedings*, 80th Annual Convention, pp.193-194•

Comment: Counselors should be wary of approaching disadvantaged children with the assumption that they feel less secure about themselves than other children. Such an assumption could lead to an inappropriate sympathy and an inability to help them maximize their positive self concepts.

Some knowledge can be truly hazardous to health and well-being! False expectancy created on the part of WISC Verbal Test examiners tended to bias them in administering what has generally been regarded as an objective instrument. Eighteen fourth-grade children from a middle class school, all of whom had normal IQ scores, were selected for the study. The examiners, who were not aware of the true purpose of the study, were provided with falsified IQ scores indicating very bright or very dull subjects. Tests were scored by the examiners and by an experienced clinician blind to study conditions. Bias effects were evident on all scores, with a mean difference of six IQ points or seven scaled score units obtained through biasing the examiners.

Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, 39(3), pp.341-454•

Comment: Counselors may be criticized for not sharing enough information, but there are times when not sharing may be best. When a child is referred for testing, great care must be exercised to make sure examiners are not provided with prior information about the child's abilities.



Are women going to college more, but getting less value from it? A study of 228 women college graduates (University of Illinois) indicates that more than half found their college training to be less than "very helpful" in obtaining a job. While 95% of the group considered themselves in the work force—at work, seeking work or enrolled in job-oriented graduate training—8.3% were unemployed compared with a national unemployment average (1971) of 5.9%, and a male graduate unemployment average of 5.4%.

Journal of College Placement, 33(2), pp.69-73•

Comment: Colleges need to help women avoid work disenchantment by calling attention to the fact that many present fields of interest to students—particularly women—have no job applicability.

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